



A Manifesto For The Original 1984

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Electronic Cafe Network Project

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Sherrie and Kit wrote the following manifesto for the original Electronic Cafe Network they created for the 1984 Summer Olympics Arts Festival in Los Angeles. For a long time they called it the "Networked Project," which was their creative response to the arrival of the Orwellian year. The name of the project was changed to acknowledge the importance of the informal community venues they preferred to use as hosts for this encounter between the public and powerful networking technologies. For a long time, the community cafe idea had been neglected as an important informal human institution in the US. Community cafes had always contributed to the quality of community life in Europe and other parts of the world. Networking culturally diverse community cafes during the Olympic Games seemed like an idea worthy of replication on a global scale. In our current world of wireless ubiquitous networking, this idea seems as quaint and as rustic as sipping coffee at the local telegraph office. All of the advances in human-to-human connectivity has not antiquated the value of the informal community commons, and Starbucks is just another franchised service provider. Cybercafes come and go in the US, but remain important assets in most other parts of the world. The Electronic Cafe Network Project was more ambitious as a concept, and wanted more in terms of community, global, and sister city interaction -- a more dynamic environment than surfing the net. The idea was simple: A network of new informal human institution for showcasing, encountering, humanizing, and acculturating world changing technologies. A place where a globally networked culture might emerge that would enable consumers of information services to evolve into the architects of services that served their interests rather than the interests of Microsoft.

The Electronic Cafe Network Project was installed and operational

for seven weeks -- connecting culturally diverse communities throughout greater Los Angeles. The artists were awarded a commissioned by the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), on behalf of the Olympics Arts Festival.

And now, the Manifesto:

THE CHALLENGE:

WE MUST CREATE AT THE SAME SCALE AS WE CAN DESTROY

1984

If the arts are to take a role in shaping and humanizing emerging technological environments, individuals and arts constituencies must begin to imagine at a much larger scale of creativity.

We must begin to create at the same scale as we can destroy, or else art, and more dangerously the human spirit and imagination, will be rendered decorative and impotent.

If the boundaries between art and life dissolve it will be the result of artists migrating towards a new order of artmaking, abandoning the conventional standards and practices and becoming 'new practitioners' or systems integrators, who produce situations, contexts, and permanent environments or utilities. The 'new practitioners' can begin the process of healing the aesthetic wound that has disfigured the business of Art, and continue the aesthetic quest in more relevant directions.

New creative activities must emerge such as multi-media creative solutions networks, not simply computer networks for Artists, but rather multi-media telecommunications networks with agendas that can engage multi-disciplinary constituencies. This will require the development of new skills and the cultivation of new relationships between the participants. The movement is towards the control of a

meaningful context, creating environments not just to support art, but that create the possibility for new scales of creativity across all disciplines and boundaries.

The dark side of the "new world information order" suggests that a new scale aesthetics be created. It will take several years from the time this work begins for creative solutions networks of appropriate number, scale, velocity, and dexterity to evolve to maturity. Consider: co-creating non-imperialistic, multi-cultural or domestic agendas for community or global scale aesthetic endeavors. Consider: the continuous re-invention of non-hierarchical telecom networks that will allow people to bypass cultural gatekeepers and power brokers. We must accept these kinds of challenges and recognize what can be gained by solving them.

All of this implies that there is a new way to be in the world. That the counterforce to the scale of destruction is the scale of communication, and that our legacy or epitaph will be determined in many ways by our ability to creatively employ informal, multi-media, multi-cultural, conversational, telecommunications and information technologies.

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